

Indigenous Peoples Day

Katie Moody

BEFORE YOU READ: Discuss the meaning of “Indigenous.” Name some synonyms.

I learned about Christopher Columbus in school. My teachers said he was a hero. He “discovered” the “New World.” My teachers did not say much about the people who lived here before he came. Because of Columbus, many of these people died.

The U.S. government also says Columbus was a hero. In the U.S., we have a holiday to celebrate him. In 1934, Congress made a holiday called Columbus Day. It is on the second Monday of October.

When I was a child, I asked myself if Columbus was really a hero. I thought about the people who lived here before he came. I read books by Indigenous peoples. I learned about the pain and loss that they feel. If we want to heal from the past, we should listen to what they say.

Many people want to change the name of Columbus Day. They don’t want to celebrate settler colonialism. They say that we should have a holiday that celebrates Indigenous people. I agree we should change the name of the holiday. It is a start. It would help us change how we tell U.S. history.

The first city to make the change was Berkeley, California. They started celebrating Indigenous Peoples Day in 1992 — 500 years after Columbus invaded this land. Since then, more than 100 cities and states have changed the name of the holiday.

I wish we had Indigenous Peoples Day when I was a child. Maybe I would have learned more about the real history of this land. I hope children in the future will learn a more accurate history than I did!



Katie Moody is an interfaith minister and hospice chaplain living on the seacoast of New Hampshire. This is an adaptation of her original piece, which appeared in the Indigenous Peoples issue of The Change Agent.

AFTER YOU READ:

- 1.** Find out whether your state or city celebrates Columbus Day or Indigenous Peoples Day. Write a letter to your city or state government and say how you feel about the holiday.
- 2.** How did Katie Moody educate herself about Indigenous peoples? How could you?
- 3.** When “people” is the plural of person, it does not have an “s” at the end. However, when “people” describes a group, then you do need an “s” if you are talking about more than one group. Try saying and writing sentences that use “people” and “peoples.”